

I V Y

L E A V E S

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Stain

A city kills her mixture with scorpions
formed on flesh canvas. Tense muscles grinding
from forced sweat and blood. Now scarred forever,
Alone, and ready to attack each other,
they sting themselves to death.

Fearlessness holds the needled pictures.
Ink burns the corners as life's cancer
eats out the conscience of the city,
her people with their anguish on their back,
stinging themselves to death.

The cries of people not afraid to die,
drilling to record the faster ways they live.
Others nonexistent- they crawl on their back,
hiding the truths from those who wouldn't understand.
Instead, they sting themselves.

Quietly, the ink-bled scorpions stir
chaos into the backs of their victims.
Alone to face the mocking bites of others,
they curl up, cornered and ready to fight,
then die from their own sting.

-Craig Crittendon

Smelling My City

The stench of fish rises
up from the street
behind an old and withered woman
who unashamedly stares
at a white-faced stranger in a cab
rattling past young, desperate vendors,
who risk jumping off the curb

for the sale of a cigarette.
Mind-choking smog has captured
this cold and unfamiliar place
and hides the desolate lives
of the city's keepers.
Houses of cardboard, weather beaten
and nearly torn down

stand across a white palace of greed
and grandeur,
where no one looks out a window that holds
the reflection of children
on a dump digging, frantically,
into the bowels of a city
unrecognized and orphaned.

-Craig Crittendon

the beloved

today i layed
away all those secrets
that i've been keeping from myself
about you

inside my time box i flashcard pictures of you
whispering in the breeze to the birds that rest in your fold
while walking on the shores that lie beneath your feet

at each frame i develop you as a black with a white
waiting until i can see. . .
your red shoes

-Bill DuBose

the lost eden

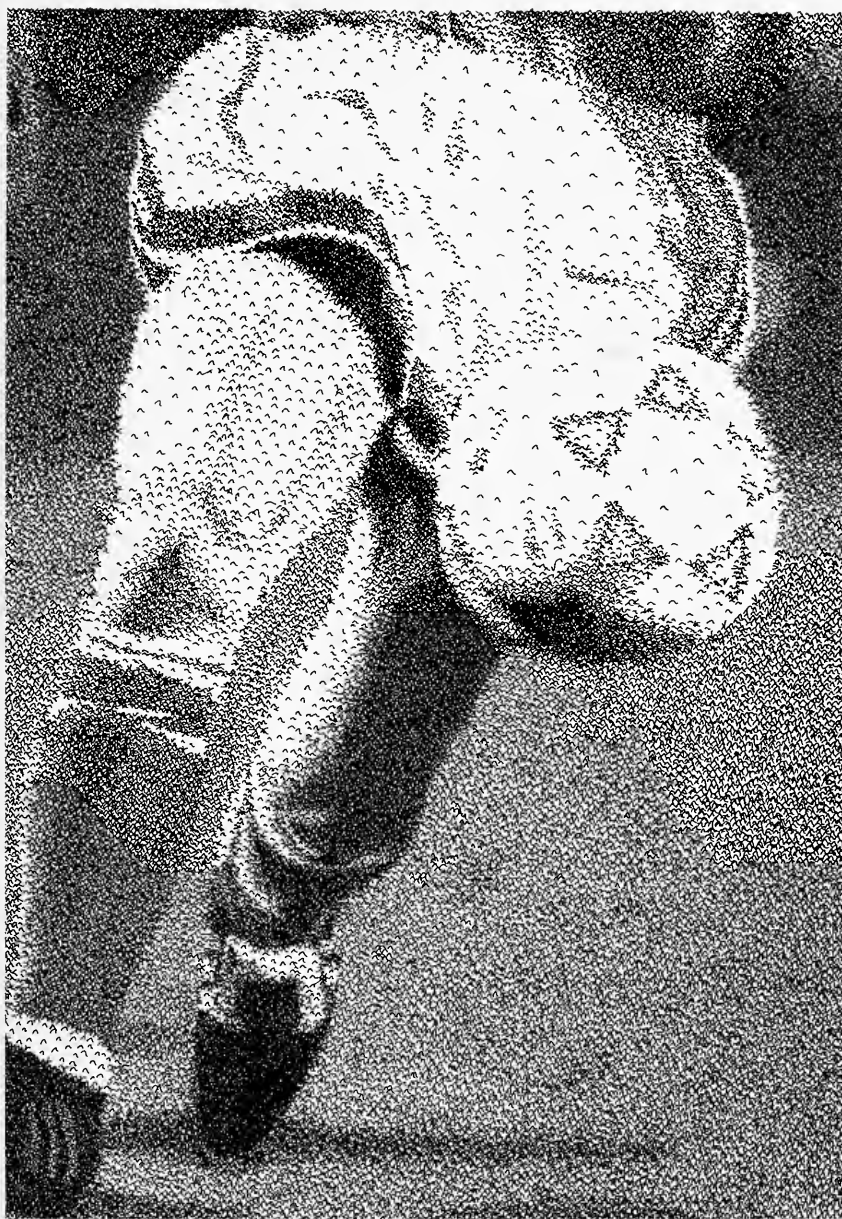
passioned fruit and god fleshed roses
crowned out and over at the gate of the cemetery
within these ruins lies and truths are remembered
of children dancing with elves
and women covering themselves

at every calloused touch the black seeds lie impressed
between vines of envy and undergrowth of mans disco with lucy

as one memory lapses another the tombs became closures
of those that had fallen with their hearts layed open

formally of the man, woman, and child
carved up in stone

-Bill DuBose



Darren Rambo





Shannon Betsinger



Barry Watts

two a.m. vigil

It's two a.m., I lie awake listening -
I hear the drone of a jet from somewhere
 coming home.
I hear the rattle and hiss of Bus #44
 haunting Main Street.
I hear persistent voices on the radio -
"Oh, my God, the senator's been shot!"
And I scream to the yellow sunflower
 on my wall,
 "Why Bobby?"

Another nightly vigil, searching for meaning -
I hear the words of love and hope leap from
 The Prophet.
I hear Richard Nixon on my black & white TV
 speak of Peace with Honor.
Persistent voices rattle and hiss in my brain -
They gave a war and thousands came.
And I touch the silver peace sign
 around my neck -
 "Why the children?"

The witching hour long past; comfortably settled -
I hear the long ago sounds of Main Street
 in my dreams.
I hear the tortured cries of men fallen in Vietnam -
 yet, I don't awaken.
My sleepless voices no longer so persistent -
For Bobby - or John, or Martin or Malcolm -
Are no longer here to dream the dreams
 that never were.
And there's no one left to ask
 The Prophet,
 "Why not?"

-Andi Jacoby

His Eye is on the Sparrow

One winter morning I stole a brief moment from a hectic schedule to glance out my kitchen window. Growing a few feet from the house was a young tree, barren of its leaves, awaiting the rebirth of springtime. Perched on separate branches were a flashy, male cardinal and a subdued, brown sparrow. The vivid contrast between the two struck me, so I stood and cautiously observed them through the windowpane.

Although they were of the same species, how unlike each other they appeared. The cardinal had a jaunty, confident air as he sat perched on the higher of the two branches. The sparrow, with his dull attire, was much less conspicuous resting on the lower branch. Both birds seemed alert and keenly aware of their immediate surroundings. As I took a step closer to the glass, they both started. In an instant, the cardinal flew off while the lowly sparrow remained.

As the small sparrow sat serenely on the branch, I was able to focus my full attention upon it. As I examined him, he no longer appeared plain and simple. He was uniquely beautiful! I could see his coat was multicolored. I saw many hues of brown blended together as if from the exquisite strokes of an artist's brush. He had a glossy, black beak and several cream-colored streaks adorning his velvet-looking breast. He no longer appeared a drab, monotone brown in contrast to the flaming red of his counterpart. As I stood only feet from him, he sat confident and bold on the small leafless branch. I was positive he knew of my presence, but he remained within my view, unafraid.

Standing in the stillness of that winter morning, mesmerized by the beauty of this tiny bird, I wondered if he was remaining on the branch to teach me a lesson

about life? My mind recalled a Bible story I had heard numerous times - the passages in Luke demonstrating how precious God values each one of us. I remembered Luke's example of the sparrows, not the cardinal's. Suddenly those familiar biblical words took on deeper meaning.

Turning from the window, to rush headlong into the flurry of my everyday life, I recognized how easily my attention is drawn to the cardinals in life and wondered how often I had missed a magnificent opportunity by failing to keep my eye on the sparrow.

-Janet Hagen

Midnight Chat

Sam gives her a goodnight kiss,
Then he leaves for the plant.
Years and years have passed,
Same eleven o'clock tradition.
She had raised the children,
PTA, doctors, hugs, kisses.
He had worked, always third.
Too tired for church on Sunday,
No time to converse—only work, eat, sleep.
Provider, yes, she needed more.
As her husband's taillights faded,
Her gentleman's headlights appeared.
She unlatched the door and turned off the news.

-Timothy Shawn Poore

Pas de Deux

With grace, she rose en pointe -
 lovely ballerina, poised to dance.
She would float, then, lightly, across the stage -
 balletic movements, motion in poetry.
And on she would glide, pas de deux -
 embraced by her prince.
There was a time for this:
With the prince of poets as her guide -
 the blue-blooded ballerina
 was known to dance her words
 across the waiting page.

Now the poet looks through a window -
 his world he sees; yet, not his world.
All things opposite of what they appear -
 as day becomes night
And diamonds turn into coal -
 through the icy window pane.
There is a time for this:
When princes must peer out -
 to glance unexpected reflections
 and shatter tinsel-town glass
 so ballerinas might dance.

-Andi Jacoby

Forgetful Poet

Poems roll around in my head,
 Sometimes when I'm lying in bed.
And oh what a fright,
 When I get up to write,
I forget what my head has just said!

-Sandy Miller

Marriage Tree

Bride of steel, scratching, biting
at the window,
Outside, laughing diamond
darkens to an oval glacier
Careless, sympathetic, but
disturbing nonetheless. . . .

Method to madness, seething
in the churchyard,
Inside a union moves
shades of earthly pale
Dancing, spinning, and
insane all the same. . . .

Sound of thunder, screaming
for almost an eternity,
Beside a candle flame
flickerings of paradise
Filling, flooding, joining our skin. . . .

-Teri Smith

Come inside my tv
That is where we live.
It may be live via satellite
Or previously recorded.
You are happy to be on tv.

Smell your brain burning with the currents :
The pungent stench of your mind wasting.
It's hot inside, but the gang's all here
Changing the channel is not that hard,
Changing your mind is harder;
So you submit, sink lower, drown
You are so apathetic
You are bought and sold
Just listen.

You have seen Yanna White
Soft, delicate hands reaching out
As another contestant buys a vowel;
Perhaps there is a star shining
From somewhere, as though behind the terminal-
But you will be here
Home is your big screen, your tv guide
Inside the inner walls.

-Teri Smith

A Moonless Sea

No horizon. All is quiet.
I curl my toes in the cold sand.
No light is reflected from the sea
As water laps softly at my feet.

I curl my toes in the cold sand,
then step out towards the black calm.
Water laps softly at my knees—
Liquid ice slowly encasing me.

Stepping out towards the black calm
I stare at white crests rolling towards me.
Liquid ice slowly encases me—
I slip further into the darkness.

I stare at white crests rolling towards me,
No light reflected from the sea.
I slip into the darkness—
No horizon, all is quiet.

-Mary Nell Tysinger

Paradise

I am in my room peering
down on the laughing man
frolicking in icy diamonds.
A wiseman emerges as snowflakes
are fused together by the strong,
gentle hands that belong to daddy.
He looks up, smiles, and points
to his creation as though it
were a sculpture by Michealangelo.
I wave back, secure and happy
in my tiny piece of paradise.

Now I am staring into solemn eyes
being told the laughing man
will laugh no more. The voice grows
fainter as it tells of a car crash,
angels, heaven, and death.
The house is full, of food, of people.
Tears run together into a flood,
as strangers invade and destroy
my tiny piece of paradise.

I am jolted back to the present
by the same icy wind that blew
me to the past. Snowflakes
drift slowly down, mingling
with the tears on my face.
I stare at the children falling
backwards, arms outstretched,
creating "angels" in the snow.
Wrapped up in their own worlds,
secure in their own pieces of paradise.

-Mary Nell Tysinger

Dedicated to Rev. Joseph E. Tysinger Jr.



Lisa Hadden



Allison Mode



John Schlude



Lisa Crone

In this room, a child
should be flowering,
But in my forgotten room,
I am cowering.
I hear the shuffling slippers
(if only I could be gone!)
Daddy is coming,
as he does every dawn.
The stench of lysol,
swirling around him in noxious fog,
The scratch of his stubble
when he nuzzles me like a dog,
All this I know.

I try to hide under quilts
and covers all askew,
For my premiere of sex
this is a hellish debut
(He tickles me —
this is how it starts)
I'M ONLY FOUR!
What makes this worse—
it's happened before.
I'm screaming for mother
until I am numb
It seems pointless,
I know she'll never come,
This I know.

Whenever I try
to recall that room,
There is a void;
a dank cavern; a doom.
I can see no vision
nor image nor life.
I feel a piercing pain
as keen as any knife
When I search for the
childhood I cannot find.
The house cannot even
be recaptured to mind.
This room, I may never know.
-Merry Lee Wentzky

Obituary

Watching talk shows while the bird starves,
Mom reads another self-help book
As her matted blonde hair slips to grey.
The pale Princess phone never rings.

Mom reads another self-help book
Then embalms her body with caffeine.
The pale Princess phone never rings.
The beige sink clogs with coffee grounds.

She embalms her body with nicotine,
Scanning yesterday's classifieds.
The beige sink clogs with coffee grounds.
Mom sits in a one-bedroom trailer,

Scanning yesterday's classifieds.
Watching talk shows while the bird starves,
Mom sits in a one-bedroom trailer.
As her matted blonde hair slips to grey.

-Anna M. Whalen

Hartwell, GA 30643

Returning home, I read the message clear.
The sign says, "Hartwell has it. Have you looked?"
Camaros thunder, cruising Depot Street.
I drive toward the lake to look.

I hear the former football god now works
At Newton Mills, the local sewing plant.
"A damn good job for here," the natives chant
Then drag and choke on Camel cigarettes.

A crumbling boat ramp, Suicide Pier,
It's called, attracted rural youths like me.
Submerged like redneck gators, we watched
The nightly blue and purple boats that slipped
Away from white debris and litter--us.

Lake waters beckoned us to swim
To far off islands muddy, green, and thick.
Escaping momentarily, we laughed.
We knew no life existed outside county lines.

We learned to smoke at Kelly's pool hall while
Our parents hummed and blithely walked to church.
"It's such a lovely place to raise our kids."
They still say, "Hartwell has it. Have you looked?"

-Anna M. Whalen

A Heart Whose Spirit Knows Mine

From the moment I saw him,
 my life changed its course-
 without effort, or pain or struggle.
From the moment our eyes met,
 we had known each other forever.
 And though we didn't understand, we accepted.
From the moment we touched
 we were lovers . . .

Our ears heard the goodbyes but our
 spirits refused the message; and
From that day to this, our spirits remain
 faithfully intertwined
They speak to each other- my spirit
 and his- on a breeze,
 in the snow, on rays of summer sun

His place in my heart stands ready,
 if ever his spirit needs a resting place.
There it will find love, and comfort,
 support. . . and hope.
And if my spirit should grow weary on a
 journey to the sun,
I know it, too, has a resting place . . .
 in a heart whose spirit knows mine.

-Anonymous

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